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THE INTERPRETATIONS OF *FIṬRAH*

YASIEN MOHAMED

> There is not a newborn child who is not born in a state of *fiṭrah*. His parents then make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian, just as an animal is born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed (at birth).[1]

The above-quoted *ḥadīth* contains the term *fiṭrah*. It refers to a concept which cannot be clearly and concisely defined or circumscribed, there is no single, precise meaning for it and any attempt to elucidate it will necessarily involve some subjective interpretation even though such an analysis stems from authentic classical Islamic scholarship and is based on the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*. The *ḥadīth* has been open to variant interpretations, even by many classical scholars. What follows is an examination of the distinctive perspectives of this concept. In so doing it is important to illustrate the differences between the three major interpretations of *fiṭrah* very clearly if we are to accept each as a distinct view. It is also important to elucidate the views of individual scholars very clearly if we are to classify each as an adherent of one of the three interpretations. The primary objectives of this paper are

1. to elucidate the three major interpretations of *fiṭrah* as expounded by selected classical and modern scholars;
2. to compare various elements of the three interpretations;
3. to critically evaluate the three interpretations with a view to isolate a preferred interpretation.

The major interpretations of *fiṭrah* are three —the *dual,* the *neutral* and the *positive*. Why three interpretations and why specifically these three interpretations? The answer to this question relates to the problem of classification of the various views of human nature as well as suitable designations for these views. Although the views of no two scholars can be said to be identical in every respect, there are certain common principles which underlie their interpretations of the Qur'ānic verses and the passages from the

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Ḥadith. A salient criterion for distinguishing one view from the other is the extent to which both good and evil are (individually or collectively) represented as either innate or as external influences from the environment. Another criterion is the role played by prophethood, revelation and good and evil as external agents of guidance and misguidance respectively. This classification is also evaluative in the sense that it denotes the degree to which 'good' as a characteristic of human nature is represented in each interpretation. For example, the neutral view represents both good and evil as external agents of guidance and is predisposed to neither, which is why it is designated as such. The view which regards man as essentially good and evil as exclusively an external agent of misguidance is optimistic, hence it is called the positive view. Scholars who posit that man has both good and evil innate tendencies may appropriately be called adherents of the dual interpretation of *fiṭrah*. The diagram illustrates how good and evil are represented by the three interpretations as innate and/or external influences of guidance and misguidance.

The dualist scholars whose views are discussed in this chapter are Sayyid Quṭb and 'Alī Sharī'atī. The only adherent of the neutral view discussed in this work is Ibn 'Abd al-Barr. Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Imām Nawāwī, Qurṭubī, Ṣābūnī, Fārūqī, al-'Aṭṭās, Jawharī, Asad, Shāh Walī Allāh and Muftī Muḥammad Shafī' are scholars who hold the positive interpretation. One may regard the above classification of the interpretations and the selection of scholars as most suitable because the opinions of most scholars who had anything substantial to say about human nature can be classified as either dual or neutral or positive. This does not, however, mean that the selection and classification is totally exhaustive or comprehensive. There is another, extremist, but nevertheless, significant view of human nature, viz. the predestinarian view. This interpretation of *fiṭrah* was originally held by scholars during a period before the middle of the eighth century.[2] These scholars were known as the Jabarites of which school Ibn Mubārak (*d.*H 181) and Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī (*d.* 1106) appear to be adherents. The predestinarians regard the determinism of cause and effect in creation as applicable to human actions as well: just as God created the world and the laws of nature, He created all the actions of man. Thus, both good and evil deeds are part of His creation. Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir further maintains that even a sinner will enter heaven if such be his predetermined fate, because despite the magnitude and extent of his sinfulness, he will, by God's decree, do enough good to guarantee a place in paradise.[3]

The implications of such views especially for Ibn Mubarak's interpretation of *fiṭrah* are decisive: each individual is by Divine decree either good or evil by nature, whether such a decree occurs arbitrarily or in accordance with a Divine Plan. Thus, irrespective of the external agents of guidance and misguidance, the individual is absolutely bound by God's will to live a prescribed life, the 'blueprint' of which had already been designed in pre-

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existence. Because of the obvious extremism and impracticable implications of this view for the Muslim, it is not regarded as a valid interpretation by most classical as well as modern Muslim scholars. Hence, it will not be discussed in any further detail in this work. Shortly before the ninth century the Qadarite school came into being in response to the Jabarites. They are also known as the libertarians and questioned the predestinarian views of the Jabarites, hence the beginnings of the neutral interpretation of *fiṭrah*. Ibn Qayyim (*d.* 751) also ascribes these differences in the interpretation of *fiṭrah* to the different positions of the various scholars on the freedom-determinism continuum.[4] We are thus left with three major interpretations of *fiṭrah,* the exposition of which now follows.

THE DUAL INTERPRETATION OF *FIṬRAH*

This interpretation was developed during the twentieth century and is held by mostly the modern Muslim scholars who were actively engaged in the revolutionary trend in contemporary Islamic movements. The dynamic concept of life as a struggle against injustice and oppression provided a working foundation for this view of human nature. It appears that this modern view is not strictly an intellectual concept which proposes certain theoretical formulations in orthodox Islamic teaching, but is also a consequence of contemporary socio-political realities in Muslim nation-states. The exposition of this interpretation takes cognizance of these characteristics in the passages which follow.

(a) Sayyid Quṭb (*d.* 1966)

Quṭb was affiliated to the *Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, a movement led by Ḥasan al-Bannā in Egypt and devoted to the revival of Islamic faith and practice, moral and social reform and resistance to the despotic leadership and governments of the day. Quṭb sought the transformation of Islam from "a religion seeking an irrelevant, static, purely transcendental ideal" to "an operative force actively at work on modern problems".[5] In his world-view Quṭb saw the role of contemporary society as necessarily falling into either one of two classes: *Niẓām Islāmī* (the true Islamic order) and *Niẓām Jāhilī* (the rule of pre-Islamic ignorance). The former represents the objective manifestation of the ideological ideal while the latter represents a rejection of this ideal. Quṭb regarded socialism, capitalism and communism as the evil by-products of *jāhilī* thought which should never be associated with the Islamic ideological ideal.[6]

According to Quṭb, man as a free being and a decision-maker is poised between that part of his nature which comprises the clay of the earth and tends towards *Niẓām Jāhilī* and that part which comprises the spirit of God and tends towards *Niẓām Islāmī*. Between these two poles man is admonished to strive simultaneously, by means of *jihād,* towards the ideal and against ignorance.[7] In his famous commentary on the Qur'ān Quṭb's support for the dual interpretation of *fiṭrah* becomes evident, especially in respect of the following verses:

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> Your Lord said to the angels: "I am creating man from clay, when I have fashioned him and breathed of my Spirit (*rūḥ*) into him, kneel down and prostrate yourselves before him". (15: 28–29)
>
> By the soul and its moulding and inspiration with knowledge of wickedness and piety. Successful is the one who keeps it true, and ruined is the one who corrupts it. (91:7–10)
>
> And We have shown him the two paths. (90:10)

Quṭb regards these verses as conclusive evidence for the creation of man with a dual nature and potential. The two essential constituents of the total human constitution, viz. the spirit of God and the clay of the earth give rise to good and evil as two equal tendencies in man —the tendencies to follow Divine guidance or to go astray.[8] In addition to this innate potential Quṭb believes that man has a conscious faculty which enables him to distinguish good from evil. This faculty also determines his actions and makes him responsible for them. The one who uses his faculty to follow his innate inclination to good, to purity himself and to control the evil drive within him will be successful whereas the one who uses it to follow his evil self will be at a loss.[9] The conscious faculty is also designed to apprehend the external sources of guidance and misguidance which complement the good and evil tendencies. The good within man is complemented by external influences such as Prophethood and Divine Revelation while the evil in man is complemented by all forms of temptation and misguidance. Nevertheless, the function of the innate tendencies is decisive; external influences help only to complement the innate tendencies while the conscious faculty enables him to choose a certain path. Human nature is so constituted that man has not only been endowed with a dualistic nature and shown the 'two paths' as suggested by Quṭb in his commentary of the verses quoted above, but consistent with this is his freedom to choose between them:[10]

> And We have shown him the right path,
> be he grateful or ungrateful. (76:3)

(b) 'Alī Sharī'atī (*d.* 1977)

Dr 'Alī Sharī'atī studied history and philosophy at Mashhad and Paris, but he was essentially a sociologist, presening an ideology of social, political and economic change based on his Islamic world-view. His ideas were popular even in pre-revolutionary Iran and they continue to influence and inspire many revolutionary movements throughout the Muslim world.[11] Sharī'atī viewed the entire history as a struggle within various pairs of opposite forces —truth and falsehood, monotheism and polytheism, oppressed and oppressor, etc. According to Sharī'atī, *tawḥīd* (which sees the world as an empire) and *shirk* (which sees the world as a feudal system) respectively represented the ultimate thesis and

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antithesis of all existence. However, this world-view did not constitute mere abstract concepts, but was rather to form the foundation for the resistance of historical and present-day *shirk* and the establishment of the eternal message of *tawḥīd*. Furthermore, this historical dualism evident in objective reality is a manifestation of a parallel dualism in his view of human nature.[12]

Sharī'atī did not write translations of, or commentaries on, the relevant Qur'ānic verses which pertain to *fiṭrah*.[13] His views on human nature stem directly from his works such as *On the Sociology of Islam* although he does make use of some Qur'ānic references on the subject. In the above work Sharī'atī discusses the creation of man and the making of his ontological state. Like Quṭb, he uses the Qur'ānic analogy of the clay of the earth and the spirit of God. However, Sharī'atī extends it further, creating a polarisation of the two phenomena as a precursory phase in his dialectic of the ultimate triumph of *tawḥid*. Clay, the lowliest symbol of baseness is combined, in man, with the Spirit of God, the most exalted entity. Man is thus a bidimensional creature with a dual nature, a compound of two, not only different, but opposing forces, one inclined to descend to material, sedimentary mud and the other inclined to ascend to the exalted Spirit of God. A further important component in this model is the free-will granted to man and the trust offered to man by God. Free-will enables him to choose towards, which pole he would incline and the trust burdens him with the responsibility of fulfilling the role of a worthy vicegerent of God on earth.[14]

In a fairly lengthy treatment of the creation of man and the opposing poles of spirit and clay in man, Sharī'atī goes on to describe their properties. Throughout this description he points out that the free will and responsibility of man together with his dual constitution makes him a dialectic reality, compelled to be always in motion and in a state of struggle. This idea of the struggle of man as a function of his ontological state is further developed by Sharī'atī: the principles of dialectic are applied to the philosophy of history and of sociology. In this regard, he uses the Biblical story of Cain and Abel as a metaphorical framework, depicting these two characters as two antithetical, opposing forces engaged in a struggle throughout history. Thus, in expounding his view of human nature, Sharī'atī also develops theoretical premises for sociological processes in history.[15]

He also attempts a comprehensive definition of Adam, the primal man: man is a theomorphic being in exile, the combination of two opposites, the dialectical phenomenon composed of the opposition "God-Satan" or "spirit-clay". "He is a free will, capable of fashioning his own destiny, responsible, committed; he accepts the unique trust of God, and receives the prostration of the angels, he is God's vice-regent on earth, but also rebels against Him. . . . He is in constant struggle within himself, striving to rise from clay to God, to ascend, so that this animal made of mud and sediment can take

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on the characteristics of God."[16]

Although one would generally prefer to regard the evolution of philosophy and religious thought in Islam as immune to the extraneous influences of other cultures, there are indications that some Muslim scholars have invariably drawn from non-Islamic, western systems and theories. Humanism and Marxism are examples of western value systems which have made at least a discernable impression on the thought and writings of Muslim thinkers. Similar trends will be referred to in more detail later.

THE NEUTRAL INTERPRETATION OF *FIṬRAH*

The neutral view of human nature, unlike the dual view, emerged after the middle of the eighth century CE directly as a response to the predestinarian views of human destiny.[17] The theological polemics which followed these extreme views on predestination constituted mainly a reaction from the libertarian scholars who sought to question the validity of the predestinarian assumptions. Scholars of the latter schools emphasized Divine power, negating human free-will while the libertarians emphasized Divine justice and defended the freedom of man, pointing to the contradiction between Divine justice and Divine predestination. They maintained that there can be no divine justice without human free-will.[18]

The most representative scholar who holds this view is Ibn 'Abd al-Barr[19] (CE 302) who replied to the views of Ibn Mubārak, a scholar of predestinarian persuasion referred to above. The latter's view of human nature is deterministic in the extreme: in accordance with the will and the foreknowledge of God, each individual is destined for either happiness or misery. Hence, the believer will be born in a state of Islam while the unbeliever will be born in a state of *kufr*.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, however, questions the validity of this interpretation of *fiṭrah*: the central *ḥadīth* refers to parents as an external inflence on the child, affecting his state of *īmān* or *kufr*, whereas Ibn Mubārak regards *īmān* or *kufr* as a function of Divine decree. Our neutralist scholars aver that *fiṭrah* is neither a state of intrinsic *īmān*, nor a state of intrinsic *kufr*. The child is born in a wholesome state, a blank state, as it were, with no cognition of *īmān* or kufr; belief or unbelief become manifest only when the child attains maturity (*taklīf*).[20] The acquisition of belief or unbelief at birth presupposes, according to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, the predestinarian notion of immutable *kufr* or *īmān*, which he rejected. He supported his claim with the following Qur'ānic verse:

> And God brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, knowing nothing. . . . (16:78)

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Ibn 'Abd al-Barr regards this state of 'knowing nothing' at birth as a wholesome, 'blank state' condition, a state of completeness, but devoid of any good or evil essence. Only a grown child at the stage of *taklīf* is capable of *īmān* or *kufr*.[21] He further argues that this view of the wholesomeness of man at birth concurs with the similitude of the animal born intact in the central *ḥadīth*. Muslim parents may help develop the *īmān* of the child by implementing Islamic teachings or they may neglect these teachings, creating the potential for the adoption of *kufr* by the child after reaching maturity. Similarly, non-Muslim parents' children are born in a wholesome state: the children become unbelievers during maturity only when they accept the un-Islamic teachings of their parents.[22] Consequently, after the onset of maturity, the individual is legally accountable for his deeds only and not for any innate state which may predispose him to certain patterns of behaviour. God says in the Qur'ān

> You will be rewarded only for what you do. (37:99)
>
> Every soul will be held in pledge for its own deeds. (74:38)
>
> We never punish until We have sent a messenger. (17:15)

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr insists that these verses refer to deeds after *taklīf*, done with the full knowledge of their import and their consequences in terms of the external agents of guidance and misguidance. The last verse especially underscores the importance of conscious human choice and free-will as an *a priori* of man's fate, whether ill or blessed. The compelling conclusion of this scholar is, therefore, that man is born in a state of ignorance and innocence, acquires knowledge of good and evil from the external environment only and makes conscious choices about which stimuli he will accept and which he will reject in order to attain the pleasure of God. Although Ibn 'Abd al-Barr by no means makes explicit the importance of external sources of guidance, it is quite obvious that the role of such guidance can never be over-emphasized. Considering that there are no innate forces within man to guide him, external guidance then becomes absolutely decisive in terms of the neutralist perspective. The neutral view, thus, lays great emphasis on the free-will of man because it was primarily a response to predestinarian views which tended towards absolute Divine predestinarianism. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr is one scholar whose interpretation of *fiṭrah* can be classified as clearly neutral.

THE POSITIVE INTERPRETATION OF *FIṬRAH*

The positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* represents the collective voices of most of the eminent Muslim scholars in the Islamic legacy who have said anything substantial about human nature. This view is not strictly a function of the development of intellectual and religious thought in Islamic history, but rather a reflection of the contemporary orthodox interpretations of the relevant

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Qur'ānic verses and passages from the *ḥadīth*. The positivist scholar is not exclusively or primarily concerned with processes of objective reality which serve as a stimulus source for inner human realities (dualism) or with the polemics of the freedom-determinism problem (neutralism); the accent in this interpretation is on man as a dynamic functional variable of reality, intricated with a universal principle of single-naturedness, of eternity of constitution and of direction (not determinism) on a given path. In order to maintain a logical sequence in the exposition of the positivist scholars' views, they will be grouped as classical and as modern scholars.

(a) Classical scholars (*Ibn Taymiyyah and others*)

Ibn Taymiyyah (*d.* 1263) is a widely recognized theologian of Ḥarran (near Damascus). He was a jurist of the Hanbalite school of thought and condemned *bid'ah*. His interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses relating to God is literal. Many of the founders of the modern Islamic movements have made extensive use of his works. According to Ibn Taymiyyah every child is born in a state of *fiṭrah* and evil is an external agent of misguidance. As such, the 'normal' state is one of innate goodness while the social environment may cause the individual to deviate from this state. He sees a natural correspondence between human nature and Islam as a value system and way of life. Ontologically, man is naturally adapted to *Dīn al-Islām;* he responds spontaneously to its teachings and follows its injunctions as if they were self-taught. *Dīn al-Islām* is the corollary, as it were, of the human *fiṭrah;* it provides the ideal or optimum conditions for sustaining and developing man's innate qualities.[23] Therefore man's nature inheres more than mere knowledge of Islam: it has love of Islam, love of God and the will to practise the *dīn* sincerely and uprighteously as a true *ḥanīf*. This points to the element of the individual will, a proactive drive which purposively seeks to realise Islamic beliefs and practices. Ibn Taymiyyah responds to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's notion of *fiṭrah* and argues that it is not merely a dormant potential which should be awakened from without, but rather the source of awakening itself, within the individual. The *ḥanīf* is not one who reacts to sources of guidance, but one who is already guided and seeks to establish it consciously in practice.[24] The central *ḥadīth* refers to a change which may be effected by the social environment; Ibn Taymiyyah maintains that this change is one from a given state, a positive state in Islam, to Christianity, Judaism, Magianism, etc. The social environment may also guide the individual to *īmān* and good conduct so that the motivation for good in him may be expressed, aided by the external sources of guidance.[25] Essentially, Ibn Taymiyyah is of the view that the human soul possesses an innate receptive capacity and a need for Islamic guidance while *Dīn al-Islām* is an adequate stimulus for this capacity and a sufficient fulfilment of this need. Moreover, if sources of external misguidance are absent, the *fiṭrah* of the individual will be actualised involuntarily and good will prevail.[26] In support of this view Ibn Taymiyyah cites Abū Hurayrah's reference to the central Qur'ānic verse (30:30) after the latter quoted the central

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ḥadīth.[27]

Ibn Qayyim (*d.* H 51) was the disciples of Ibn Taymiyyah and also held similar views on the positive interpretation. He does not regard *fiṭrah* as mere knowledge of good and evil at birth but as an active, innate love and acknowledgement of God which reaffirms His Lordship. He also explains that verse 16:78 does not refer to innate knowledge of Islam or God, but rather to knowledge of the particulars of religion in general which is why the latter type of knowledge is absent at birth. Moreover, *fiṭrah* is not merely the capacity or readiness to receive Islam, in which case such a condition can be unfulfilled when parents choose Judaism or Christianity as the child's religion. Ibn Qayyim argues that *fiṭrah* is veritably the acknowledgment of God, *tawhīd* and *dīn al-Islām.*[28] Imām Nawawī (*d.* 676/1277), a Shāfi'ite jurist who wrote the principal commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, defines *fiṭrah* as the unconfirmed state of *īmān* before the individual consciously acknowledges his belief. Hence, if a child were to die before reaching the age of discretion, he will be of the inmates of paradise, even if his parents were polytheists or atheists.[29] (The question of the destiny of the Muslim, non-Muslim, child, polytheist, etc. will be discussed in further detail in the section of the legal implications of *fiṭrah.*) Qurṭubī (*d.* H 671) also holds the positive view of *fiṭrah* and he uses the analogy of the physically unblemished animals in the central *ḥadīth* in order to illustrate that just as animals are born intact, so are humans born with the flawless capacity to accept the Truth. However, the animal may be injured and scarred; by implication, *fiṭrah* may be corrupted or altered by external sources of misguidance. Ibn Qayyim made the distinction between a state of readiness and an innate predisposition probably because he realised that the former condition may be unfulfilled, rendering *fiṭrah* a mutable and corruptible tendency.

(b) Modern Scholars

Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣābūnī, a contemporary scholar, derived his views on *fiṭrah* from the central *ḥadīth.* His commentary on this *ḥadīth* bears a distinctive homiletic tone —he asks whether religion is innate and natural in man, whether it is good or evil which is rooted in man, and whether man is born with the spiritual capacity to do good. In answer to these questions Ṣābūnī refers to one of the principles laid down by the Holy Prophet, namely that good is intrinsic in man, while evil is incidental. Man is naturally disposed to goodness and purity. However, the influence of the social environment on the child is very pervasive. Parents are closest to the child and can cause the corruption of the child's *nafs* (self), the *'aql* (intellect) and the *fiṭrah.* Ṣābūnī, like Qurṭubī, regards *fiṭrah* as innate, but corruptible. Without any such influence the child will grow up to remain true to his *fiṭrah*; only parents and the rest of society expose the child to error, misery and unbelief.[30] As in the analogy of the wholesome animal, man himself deforms and disfigures that which is created beautiful and good. Ṣābūnī refers to the central Qur'ānic verse and argues that

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it is a rebuttal to those, especially the Marxists and the Communists, who deny *fiṭrah*.[31]

Ismā'īl al-Fārūqī (*d.* 1986) sees the love of all that is good and of the values which constitute the Divine Will as the pre-emptive implantation in man by God. With reference to the central Qur'ānic verse Fārūqī views man as a creature endowed with a "unique faculty, the sensus numinis, with which all humans may acknowledge God as God, and recognise His Commandments as the norms or ought-to-be's of all that is".[32] Innate knowledge of, and obedience to, God is natural while disobedience is unnatural, though possible. Fārūqī also regards *fiṭrah* as corruptible by evil motives or passions. He refers to the corruption of the 'natural mechanism' in man; we can thus accept that the notion of a corruptible *fiṭrah* is more than just implicit in this statement. According to al-'Aṭṭās man's submission in pre-existence (7:172) signifies his debt to God as well as his utter state of loss so that he may repay his debt and return to God by giving himself up in service to Him. This obligation is felt by man as a normal and natural inclination —*fiṭrah*— which al-'Aṭṭās equates with *dīn* by referring to 30:30. *Fiṭrah* is the nature of submission in man and *dīn* is the pattern of submission for man. Conscious and willing submission establishes narmony and cosmos while resistance to submission results in discord and chaos.[33] Shaykh Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī refers to the central *ḥadīth* and views man as born in a state of *īmān* (faith). Also, the mind of man is like a *tabula rasa,* receptive to both good and evil stimuli, but is naturally predisposed to the reception of good stimuli; evil is an external source of misguidance while good is a predominant tendency. In the absence of evil stimuli, man has the capacity to do good and recognise the oneness of God.[34] Muhammad Asad makes reference to the central *ḥadīth,* the central Qur'ānic verse and 7:172. With regard to the first reference Asad explains that man's "instinctive cognition of God and self-surrender to Him"[35] is contrasted with the Jewish, Christian and Magian traditions. As such, in terms of the import of 30:30, *fiṭrah* connotes an "inborn, intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, true and false, and thus to sense God's existence and oneness".[36] Significantly, Asad maintains, though not quite explicitly, that *fiṭrah* is incorruptible since God will not "allow any change to corrupt" what He has created. Asad underscores man's recurring submission in his translation and commentary of 7:172, referring to it as an "instinctive cognition" and an "existential response".[37]

Shāh Walī Allāh (*b.* 1702) articulates a positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* with a more holistic character: spiritual as well as biological man is intrinsically good. *Fiṭrah* is a more comprehensive concept, incorporating innate spiritual and physical tendencies which seek gratification in order to enhance and secure a wholesomeness in man's spiritual and physical constitution. It appears, if one should extrapolate a logical succession of this notion, that the spiritual inclination is dictated by the innate state of purity while the physical instinct is informed by the *Sharī'ah* (an external source of guidance).[38] Muftī Muḥammad

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Shafi' distinguishes between *fiṭrah* as a concept synonymous with *dīn al-Islām* and *fiṭrah* as the readiness to accept Islam —the capability to recognize, acknowledge and obey God. Muftī accepts the latter interpretation, but adds that in terms of 30:30, *fiṭrah* is immutable. He thus rejects the notion of a corruptible *fiṭrah* and explains that it can co-exist with disbelief (*kufr*). The intrinsic state of *fiṭrah* remains an unchanging given while the extrinsic variable states of faith and conduct are mutable and dynamic.[39]

The positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* bears the stamp of classical as well as modern orthodoxy, reflecting a wide concensus of scholastic perspectives. The uniformity of interpretation among these scholars, however, occurs primarily with respect to the universal principle of the intrinsic goodness of man. A closer examination of their writings reveal varying and even conflicting views between as well as within the broad classical and modern divisions. For example, the mutability/immutability problem, if we may refer to it as such, remains unresolved insofar as no scholar has convincingly argued for or against either pole of this dichotomy. It also appears that the classical scholars were less inclined to believe in the mutability of *fiṭrah* or that the modern scholars articulated a more explicit belief therein. A comparison of the three interpretations, which follows hereafter, reveals similar kinds of differences.

COMPARISON OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE THREE INTERPRETATIONS

The foregoing exposition reveals some interesting similarities and differences between the three interpretations. However, a comparison of the various elements of the interpretations may be undertaken not for the sake of comparison in itself, but rather to show how each reflects an essential unity in their conception of human nature while manifesting differences in terms of certain unique properties peculiar to a particular interpretation. The elements compared below are significant because they define the orientation and parameters of their respective interpretations. Although there is no specified method of comparison, an inherent logic renders the discussion of successive elements systematic and intelligible.

TABLE SHOWING A HORIZONTAL COMPARISON OF THE THREE INTERPRETATIONS OF *FIṬRAH*

INTERPRETATIONS OF *FIṬRAH*		
DUAL	NEUTRAL	POSITIVE
Born with the preparedness for both *īmān* and *kufr*	Born in a state of ignorance and innocence no *īmān* or *kufr*	Born in a state of *īmān* and Islam with a potential for *kufr*

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Equal innate predisposition to both good and evil	No innate predisposition to good or evil —man is a blank slate	Innately predisposed to know God and to do good
Evil an external agent of misguidance which complements the innate evil in man	Evil an external agent of misguidance	Evil an external agent of misguidance
Prophethood and revelation as external divine agents of guidance which complement the good in man	Prophethood and revelation as external divine agents of guidance	Prophethood and revelation as external divine agents of guidance which complement the innate predisposition of man

Horizontal Comparison

1. represents the characteristics man possesses as a neonate.

2. represents the extent to which good and/or evil is/are represented as innate or environmental influences which determine human nature.

3. represents evil as an external agent of misguidance and as the antithesis of prophethood and revelation.

4. represents prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and revelation (*risālah*) as the external agents of Divine guidance.

Table of the Three Interpretations

The above table illustrates a clear difference between the three interpretations with regard to innate predisposition: both the dual and the positive views include innate predisposition as an active element of the human metaphysical constitution, but with a difference in degree. In the dual view, both good and evil are equally innate while in the positive view only good is innate. In the neutral view nothing is innate —man is born without any inclination, rendering him totally susceptible to environmental influences, be they good or evil. Neutralist man acquires an Islamic conscience in life while both the positivists and dualists are born with it, although the latter's conscience may be obscured by the co-existing innate evil.

Because he has no inclination or consciance, neutralist man is ignorant of both good and evil, but also innocent in that he is totally sinless. The equal innate tendencies of good and evil in dualism may render him susceptible to

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equal good and evil influences while positivist man is born in a state of *īmān* and submission to God with the potential to commit evil by means of his free-will and intellect. Prophethood and revelation serve as external agents of divine guidance which naturally complement the innate good in man in the dual and the positive interpretations. In the neutral view prophethood and revelation are also agents of divine guidance, but they are manifested as independent entities. Similarly, in both the neutral and the positive interpretations evil is an independent external source of misguidance while in the dual interpretation external evil stimuli complement the innate evil in man.

Comparison of the Views of the Various Scholars

Our first comparison is within the dual view, that is, between the views of Quṭb and Sharī'atī. Since both scholars are dualists one can assume that they regard good and evil as equally innate in man: they viewed the evil in man as a force to be countered with the human innate goodness. Their means is *jihād* and their object is the conquest of the despotic rulership of the day. However, Sharī'atī develops the theory of his argument into a dialectic of opposing forces in a perpetual state of struggle while Quṭb deliberately steered clear of such theoretical formulations. In theoretical terms Quṭb saw good and evil as represented by *Niẓām Islāmī* and *Niẓām Jāhilī* respectively —Sharī'atī by *shirk* and *tawḥīd*. Both scholars accept free-will as a divinely ordained aspect of human nature. Owing to his notion of the dialectical process of history, Sharī'atī's dualist man is irrevocably destined for the conquest of *shirk* and for the acceptance of *tawḥīd*. Nevertheless, the individual, at any point in time has the freedom to choose between good and evil. Quṭb regards man as a being poised between divine and satanic forces which, with the aid of the external sources of guidance, should strive for the realisation of *Niẓām Islāmī* and the conquest of *Niẓām Jahilī*. The concept of struggle, i.e. *jihād al-asghar* is integral to the dual view of *fiṭrah* because the scholars who held these views addressed the political realities of the day and thus saw the need to view man as a being in a continuous state of struggle. In the positive view this struggle is by no means undervalued; the positivist scholars did not address the struggle of man primarily in terms of socio-political realities, but rather in terms of his own self, i.e. *jihād al-akbar*.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr is the only neutralist scholar discussed in this work. Unlike the positive and negative views, the neutral view possesses no element of innate knowledge, tendency or condition. The role of learning and the environment thus play a fundamental role in the shaping of the individual's personality, character and behaviour. The idea of behaviour as exclusively contingent on environmental stimuli is very akin to Skinner's[40] Behaviourism. A fundamental difference, however, is that Skinner's view is characterised by a radical determinism while Ibn 'Abd al-Barr formulated his view specifically to counter the predestinarian views of his predecessors. The irony is, of course,

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that Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, unlike Skinner, was a believer in the human free-will. The isolation of good and evil as exclusively extrinsic stimuli in the neutral view lends an even greater significance to man as the decision-maker, the respondent to good or evil stimuli in the environment —more so than in the dual and the positive views.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr was a predecessor of Ibn Taymiyyah who responded to the former's view of man: the latter maintained that *fiṭrah* is not a dormant potential, but rather an active tendency which constantly urges man to believe in God and act according to His will. Ibn Taymiyyah thus believed that apart from environmental stimuli which include the external sources of guidance and of misguidance, there is also a singular, uni-directional tendency within man which prompts him to do good. He saw *dīn al-Islām* and *fiṭrah* in a dynamic and complementary relation to each other while Ibn 'Abd al-Barr viewed them as distinct entities. By implication, neutralist man may not necessarily attain divine guidance in the absence of evil stimuli since he may simply choose not to be guided. On the other hand, positivist man is naturally guided in the absence of evil stimuli.

Ibn Qayyim held a similar view and argued that *fiṭrah* as a mere state of knowledge may mean an unfulfilled *fiṭrah* if the child is raised as a Jew or a Christian. Qurṭubī's view is significantly different from that of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim insofar as he stops short of saying that *fiṭrah* is more than just a state of readiness or preparedness for Islam. The implication is, of course, that *fiṭrah* is mutable. Although none of the classical scholars discussed in this work directly addressed the question of the mutability of *fiṭrah,* one can safely assume that they (with the possible exception of Qurṭubī) accepted it as immutable. It is probable that they have understood *la tabdīl li khalqillāh* (30:30) in the absolute sense, meaning that there shall be no change in Allah's creation. Of the modern scholars, Sabūnī and Fārūqī clearly believe in *fiṭrah* as a mutable phenomenon. Asad and muftī Shafī' maintained that *fiṭrah* is immutable while *al-'Aṭṭas,* Jawharī and Shāh Walī Allāh have not addressed the issue in any way. There appears to be a departure from the classical to the early modern view. The late modern and contemporary view seems to indicate a return to the original classical belief in the immutability of *fiṭrah*.

Finally, there are salient features of Shāh Walī Allāh's and Muḥammad Shafī's views worthy of mention. Shāh Walī Allāh's holistic conception of human nature is unique in that he is the only scholar discussed in this paper who has incorporated a biological dimension in his interpretation of *fiṭrah*. None of the other scholars, even those of the dual and the neutral persuasion saw any relation between the physical constitution and the innate nature of man. Muḥammad Shafī' is the only scholar in this work who makes a distinction between *fiṭrah* as synonymous with *dīn al-Islām* and *fiṭrah* as a state of readiness to accept Islam. Both views form part of the positive interpretation and were

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already articulated by classical scholars like Qurṭubī and 'Asqalānī.

EVALUATION

The three interpretations and the views of the various scholars presented above are all valid insofar as they are based on Islamic sources and value systems. The concept of *fiṭrah,* however, is not independent of man's creation, role and destiny: a notion of *fiṭrah* may thus be valid in that it is derived from the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah,* but it may be invalidated or at least blemished by unsound assumptions. Because no single view of *fiṭrah* expounded in this work can be regarded as 'correct', it does not mean that a view which best accords with the Qur'ānic principles, the *Sunnah* and the authentic Islamic scholarship cannot be developed. Similarly, views which differ with the Islamic legacy cannot be totally rejected since they may adhere to fundamental principles of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah.* The evaluation which follows is an attempt to assess the validity of the three interpretations as well as of the views of individual scholars. The assessment itself is not an attempt to deride the views or the person of any scholar; as Muslim, each scholar has contributed invaluably to the Islamic legacy and this section serves only to evaluate their theories *per se* and their underlying assumptions.

(a) Neutral View

The neutral view of *fiṭrah* posits that man is devoid of any innate predisposition. The implications of this view reflect on a God who has created man out of nihility and who has given him no sense of self-direction. The spirit of man has a divine origin and the ultimate destiny of this spirit is again the Divine Essence. Thus, it is inconceivable that the soul engendered by the Spirit of God, breathed into existence by the Divine and destined to return to the Divine, inheres no trace of the mark of the Divine. *Dīn al-Islām* is the way perfected for man by God and *fiṭrah* is the nature of man derived from God pointing to the affinity and assonance between *dīn* and *fiṭrah.* Not so in the neutral views; essentially, man is dissociated from *dīn* and any association is purely by means of objective perception of environmental stimuli; conscience is absent at birth and is acquired by the individual only later in life. Neutralist man is guided only because he chooses to be guided, not because he possesses an inclination to be guided. The guidance he does receive is exclusively external in origin —there is nothing within him that can motivate him to do any good. The measure of freedom in this view was necessary to rid man of the shackles of predestinarianism, but the implication of this freedom is the elimination of the affinity between man and his *dīn* and man and his Lord. A further implication of this view is that those who did not receive guidance have no way in which to know God —their destiny is uncertain. Will they be damned for being born ignorant or will they be forgiven for haying lived in ignorance? The undue emphasis on freedom together with the notion of ontological ignorance make this view extremely problematic.

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(b) Dual View

Socio-political realities appear to be applied by the dualist scholars to define and describe human nature: inner human and ontological realities are a reflection of objective existential realities. The evil of the real world is represented by *shirk* and by *niẓām jāhilī* while the good of the real world is represented by *tawḥīd* and by *niẓām Islāmī*. In man, *fiṭrah* manifests a parallel kind of dualism. Given an intellect and a will, man is stationed between his innate good and evil and must now accept responsibility for tending towards either while he is admonished to fulfil his role as *khalīfah*.

This view poses two problems: firstly, if human nature is proposed as a consequence and a parallel manifestation of the nature of objective reality, then it makes nonsense of the creation of pre-existential man with innate tendencies, the assumption being that man is innately good and evil simply because good and evil are integral to reality. Neither Sharī'atī nor Quṭb explicitly makes any such propositions, but their insistence on the association between the nature of socio-political struggle and the nature of man lends itself precisely to this kind of possible misinterpretation. Secondly, good and evil, being counterpoised in man, suggest that the parallel counter-position of good and evil in the real world represents God, the good, as the thesis; and Iblīs, the evil, as the antithesis. While *shirk* and *tawḥīd* may well be represented as opposite poles of the real world, Iblīs can never be seen as the antithesis of God; he is a creature of God and can in no way be associated, compared or weighed up against God. Any notion of establishing Iblīs as the rival of God on earth boarders on *shirk* —and the dual view implicitly suggest this

According to Quṭb man will realise his true nature by means of *dīn al-Islām*. In terms of the dual view this means that *dīn al-Islām* is a means of projecting man's innate nature, that is, both his innate good and his innate evil. Taking this argument a logical step further, one may conclude that Islam exhorts man to be both good and evil, which is obviously absurd. Also, if man tends completely to, say, the evil dimension of his bipolar nature, is it possible that the good in him may be completely overshadowed and be corrupted? Sharī'atī and Quṭb did not address this problem and it therefore remains uncertain whether either dimension has the potential to obscure if not to obliterate the other.

The Qur'ān (91:7-10) refers to the soul's knowledge of wickedness and piety and to the destiny of those who keep it true and those who corrupt it. Quṭb draws on this verse to support his dual view, but his interpretation of the verse is questionable because he ignores the significance of the word *sawwa* and renders an inaccurate translation of *alhama*.[41] *Sawwa* is a verb which denotes making something uniform and in balanced proportion. Hence the noun *sawiy* refers to an upright person. In the context of 91:7-10 this means that man's soul

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was created upright and well-balanced. God then made man aware of or endowed him with knowledge of good and evil —*alhama*— which Quṭb incorrectly translates as "to create a disposition or natural preparedness" for good and evil.[42] This knowledge, significantly enough, is innate, not acquired because God swears by the soul which has knowledge in 91:7 and the subject through to verse 10 is consistently the metaphysical. Quṭb appears to be in agreement with this when he refers to this condition as 'natural'. Innate knowledge of good and evil is in this case not synonymous with an innate predisposition for good and evil. The balanced and upright pre-disposition conveyed by *sawwa* and the knowledge of good and evil suggested by *alhama* are only nominally independent states because the latter (i.e. the innate knowledge of good and evil) complements the innate predisposition to good in man.

Quṭb also refers to 90:10, "And We have shown him the two paths" in support of his dual view.[43] Here again a closer examination of the verse in its context suggests a markedly different interpretation. The two paths referred to in 90:10 cannot be associated with those of the innate dualism of his theory. Rather, they are the paths of good and evil in objective reality or, as the six verses which follow corroborate, the steep path of virtue and the easy path of vice. The verses which precede verse 10 also, in consistency with the latter verses, refer explicitly to aspects of physical as opposed to metaphysical reality. Sharī'atī and Quṭb refer to 15:28-29 as evidence of the creation of dualist man:

> Behold I Thy Lord said to the angels.
> I am about to create man, from sounding clay,
> From mud moulded into shape;
> When I have fashioned him
> (In due proportion) and breathed
> Into him of My spirit
> Fall ye down in obeisance Unto Him.

These verses describe the whole and complete constitution of man —physical and spiritual: matter is the one constituent of man and is derived from the 'sounding clay' while spirit is the second constituent, derived from the Spirit of God Himself. Matter or the 'clay' part of man is transient and its purpose is solely to provide man with the psyche or the carnal self and the terrestrial garb by means of which he can fulfil his role as *khalīfah*. As indicated in our interpretation of the central *ḥadīth*, the human body and psyche are at most wholesome. In themselves they inhere no good or evil: they were created 'neutral' entities from a 'neutral' matter called clay. The carnal self (*nafs*) of man is naturally sensitive to stimuli from the environment and is therefore susceptible to misguidance. This does not mean, of course, that the *nafs* is itself naturally evil; evil is separate and independent of man's psychic self. The conscious faculty of man is capable of controlling the carnal self and can,

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moreover, lead the individual to the good instead of the evil. In the final analysis we have to accept that *fiṭrah* does not at all reside in the carnal or the psychic self: clay is strictly the material part of man's constitution and shares no part at all in *fiṭrah*. The highest form of the *nafs* is the mind and the lowest form is matter, both of which are bound to perish. The spirit (*rūḥ*) of man is not bound to perish, but will return to its origin which is God (96:8). *Fiṭrah* in its entirety is vested in man's spirit and since God has breathed of His spirit into the clay to generate the spirit of man, *fiṭrah* itself must be good, because God is good and the source of all good. Having thus mentioned the true role and import of the psychic self (*nafs*) and the spirit (*rūḥ*), the latent folly of a duality within the nature of man becomes obvious. As with the neutral view, it would be a contradiction of the attributes of Divine Justice and Mercy if God made part of man's nature evil, bent on the destruction of good. The purpose of man is to worship God and God Himself will guide man to that purpose; innate evil is completely at variance with this Divine Plan.

The Concept of Struggle

The comparison in the previous section revealed a significant contrast between Quṭb and Sharī'atī's approach to the dual nature of man: although both view the concept of struggle as integral to human nature and to the real world. Quṭb was particularly wary of imbibing terms, concepts and ideas from foreign and un-Islamic ideologies while Sharī'atī was overtly bent on expropriating these in order to evince his peculiar view of human nature in a "scientifically" correct method[44] by extracting from the Qur'ānic themes he considers relevant to modern disciplines such as history and sociology.[45] Quṭb parted company with his contemporaries when he refused to use the alien symbols employed by them to describe the Islamic ideals.[46] Sharī'atī, on the other hand, sees the need for symbolism and he uses, for example, the Biblical Cain and Abel to represent historical *shirk* and *tawḥīd*.[47] Marxist terminology, such as masses, dialectic, proletariat, bourgeoisie, etc. are virtually the vernacular of Sharī'atī's highly innovative mind. Islam is for Sharī'atī the summation of a dialectic and *tawḥīd* the unitary and integrating principle which restores absolute equality as the primeval state of social life. This absolute equality is the destiny of man and is more a function of economics and the class system than of *fiṭrah* as a decisive force in creation.[48] Such writings betray a radical departure from the orthodoxy of the Islamic legacy and a clear leaning towards the decidedly dubious concept of 'Islamic socialism'.

The equilibrium between action and contemplation is central to the concept of struggle as an ideal in Islam —it relates directly to the balance between *jihād al-akbar* (the greater *jihād*) and *jihād al-asghar* (the lesser *jihād*). As the designated meaning suggests, *jihād al-akbar* is the more important struggle and starts within the individual. Of course, this does not mean that each individual must necessarily become a veritable saint before he can engage in the

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social struggle of *jihād al-asghar*; it does, however, mean that the outer social struggle is rendered meaningless if not preceded or accompanied by at least a sincere and conscious effort to conquer the lower self. Quṭb considered this condition of the liberation and purification of the soul as a fundamental first step towards liberating man; without this moral catharsis no attempt at improving human life can be possible.[49] Sharī'atī, however, attempts an extremely superficial distinction between "speaking and acting, analysing and applying", where talking is a mere intellectual exercise and working is the application thereof in practice[50] —no reference is made to the profounder values which make the *mujāhid* (one who engages in *jihād*) a true and devoted fighter in the way of God. Indeed, his description of Ḥallāj as engaging in 'spiritual or mystical lunacy'[51] is probably evidence of his subtle contempt for the way of contemplation in the struggle against social injustice. Even though Quṭb's views as indicated above are explicit, the dual view lends itself to undue emphasis on action at the expense of contemplation.

In the neutral view there is no innate struggle because there are no innate forces within man. Although the concept of struggle cannot be said to be alien to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's conception of human nature, it is true that it plays no fundamental role in his view of man. Again, by extrapolation, one can conceive of the neutralist's struggle as a conscious endeavour to manipulate the environment and to pit the external sources of guidance against the external sources of misguidance. The believer has no recourse to any inner resources which may incline him to offer more meaningful resistance to the forces of evil. The shortcomings of this interpretation of *fiṭrah* in terms of the concept of struggle are self-evident: the battle against social injustice is bound to be contingent on an understanding of the external sources of guidance whereupon it may become a stagnant intellectual concept held by the learned élite who may themselves be the perpetrators of social injustice. There is no innate force informing man that evils like oppression must be eradicated because it is not in the nature of neutralist man to feel the need for the annihilation of such forces.

The Positive View

In the positive view man is a dynamic, an active participant in objective reality. His innate nature, i.e. his *fiṭrah* is wholly and exclusively characterised by goodness and is complemented by the external sources of guidance, namely, prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and revelation (*risālah*). It is because of the proactive nature of the goodness within him that positivist man is invariably in a state of conflict with the evils of the external sources of misguidance. Struggle is covertly integral to human nature because, according to the Qur'ān, God created man in a state of struggle (90:4). However, this struggle commences within man, with *jihād al-akbar* and is the precursor to the struggle against social injustice which is *jihād al-asghar*. Contemplation is both a precondition and an inseparable part of action; the one is meaningless without the other. Although

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there is no overt emphasis on action as in the dual view, it is by no means ignored in the positive view. The classical as well as the modern scholars of the latter interpretation have not articulated their views on man primarily in terms of the struggle against the evil forces of objective reality —probably because none of them were personally affiliated to resistance movements bent on laying bare the problems of and dismantling the tyrranical authorities of the day, nor were they inclined to assimilate dimensions of contemporary socio-political realities into their concept of *fiṭrah*. Of course, this does raise the question of how, and to what extent, positivist man *per se* should or can address problems of social injustice. Given the extremely complex realities of the Muslims' struggle throughout the world, this remains, at best, an open question which cannot be adequately dealt with in a work of this nature. The subject of methodology in the life of Muslim *mujāhidīn* should best be left to the specialists of this area. Suffice it to say that action and contemplation are interdependent dimensions and integral components of a coherent whole in the concept of struggle in Islam.

Positivist scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim and Imām Nawawī have remained remarkably faithful to the traditional interpretations of the relevant passages on *fiṭrah* in the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*. Their views accord fully with those of other orthodox scholars and the excellence they themselves have achieved in terms of both learning and piety has established them as figures of truly authoritative and authentic Islamic scholarship. A demerit, albeit somewhat insignificant, of Qurṭubī's view on *fiṭrah* is that the notion of man's receptive capacity to accept the Truth is not carried a logical step further to conclude that the goodness of *fiṭrah* is the most dynamic, dominant and essential reality of man's innate nature. Of greater significance and concern is Asad's implicit rejection of the pre-existenial *fiṭrah* as alluded to in 7:172. All the classical and modern scholars agree that man's submission in this verse occurred in pre-existence, but Asad insists that it is an 'existential response'. Scholars such as Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Taymiyyah, Tustarī, Ṭabāṭabā'ī and virtually every scholar of Sufi persuasion agree that man's submission referred to in this verse occurred in pre-existence, but Asad insists that it (the submission or covenant) is an 'instinctive' cognition which recurs throughout man's earthly life. A detailed analysis of 7:172 reveals that the verse constitutes, firstly, reference to an event in the past during which God had willed and realised the existence of the entire progeny of Adam; secondly, His question to this progeny —Am I not your Lord?— and, thirdly, man's reply to God —'yea, we do testify'. Asad first alters the tense in the verse from the past to the present tense for some obscure reason he calls 'continuity'. Secondly, he gives a metaphorical interpretation of "the creative act of God and of man's existental response to it". The implication of this interpretation is very serious: post-existential *fiṭrah* without the Covenant means that the *mushrikūn* can on the Last Day indeed disclaim responsibility in that they never knew of their Lord's commands. This very possibility is addressed in the next verse, but Asad conveniently refrains from commenting

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on it. Shāh Walī Allāh's proposition of a *fiṭrah* with a spiritual and a biological dimension poses certain obvious problems. As pointed out above in this section, *fiṭrah* does not at all reside in the physical self which is at most wholesome at birth, but entirely corruptible by the lower *nafs*; evil physical instincts simply do not accord with a good spiritual essence. If *fiṭrah* in its entirety is bound to return to its origins, then it remains a mystery how corporeal man can be reconciled with eternal reality. The notion that biological man inheres *fiṭrah* is a fallacy because the physical self bears no essence; it is bound to become dust again and this earthly cyclic process is its only continuous dynamic.

The Mutability/Immutability Problem

Why is the mutability/immutability polarisation problem so important? If God is the first, the last, the evident and the immanent (Q: 57:3) then He is certainly immutable and then, certainly too, that which comprises His essence is immutable. Since the human *rūḥ* is of divine origin, and *fiṭrah* is integral to it, it follows that *fiṭrah* is also an immutable phenomenon.

This very question of the immutability of *fiṭrah,* is therefore, a fundamental one and cannot be ignored in any study of human nature in Islam. As pointed out in the comparison section above, the classical scholars did not address this question probably because of the epistemological history of the concept of *fiṭrah;* they interpreted *la tabdīl li khalqillāh* (30:30) in the absolute as opposed to the imperative sense and simply understood that *fiṭrah* is immutable. There is evidence, however, which suggests that Qurṭubī may have believed that external sources of misguidance can corrupt or alter man's innate capacity to accept the Truth: a logical extension of the analogy Qurṭubī uses suggests that just as the wholesome animal may be scarred or injured after birth, so may the innate nature of man be altered by forces of evil. Among the modern scholars, Ṣābūnī and Fārūqī both entertained the false notion of a corruptible *fiṭrah*. The former regarded parents and the wider social environment as agents of corruption which may alter *fiṭrah* while the latter referred to the corruption of the 'natural mechanism' in man by his evil motives and passions. Al-'Aṭṭās, Jawharī and Shāh Walī Allāh have also dealt with this profound concept in a rather superficial manner not to have addressed the mutability/immutability question at all.

This evaluation should, however, not entirely be seen in a negative light. Despite some invalid claims, the views of the above scholars serve to add to the rich diversity of the intellectual development of the Islamic legacy, and in this sense none of the views of the scholars discussed is irrelevant. Although unsound assumptions may invalidate claim it does not detract from the value of the scholar's contribution as a whole. No single scholar has produced a 'model' answer or interpretation of *fiṭrah* and this author is least inclined to do that. We have, nevertheless, attempted to present, differentiate, assimilate and integrate

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some of the representative views on *fiṭrah* and to derive therefrom a view, namely the positive view, which hopefully best accords with the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. The positive interpretation of *fiṭrah* is intrinsic to the Muslim mind and reflects on credible realities of God, the universe and on man and his role on earth. The latter reality especially, that is man's role as *khalīfah* and *'Abd* on earth, is under the indomitable and pervasive influence of *fiṭrah* as an existential reality which permeates the metaphysical, epistemological, psychological, volitional and legal dimensions of human existence.

[1]Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Qadr, Bāb ma'nā kullu mawlūdin yūladu 'ala'l-fiṭrah wa hukm mawt aṭfāl al kuffār wa aṭfāl al-muslimīn, Hadith 2658.

[2]H.A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (London: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 602.

[3]'Abd al-Qādir, Jaylānī, *Ghuniyat al-Tālibīn*, translated by Amanullah Khan (Deoband: Malik Publishers, 1971), pp. 149-50.

[4]Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī Sharh Ṣaḥīh al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n 1300), vol. III, p. 199.

[5]Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 157.

[6]Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 151.

[7]Sayyid Quṭb, *Milestones* (Durban: Taj Company, n.d.), p. 46. cf. Sayyid Quṭb, *Ma'ālim fi'l-Tarīq* (Beirut: Darul-Shuruq, 1980), p. 43.

[8]Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (Darul-Sharuq, 1979), vol. VII, p. 3917. See also, Vol. III, pp. 1392-4, 1400.

[9]Ibid. p. 3918.

[10]Ibid p. 3917.

[11]'Alī Sharī'atī, *On the Sociology of Islam*, translated by H. Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), pp. 13-27. See also 'Alī Sharī'atī, *Man and Islam*, translated by F. Marjani (Houston: Filinc, 1981), pp vi-xiv.

[12]Sharī'atī, *Sociology of Islam*, pp. 29-31.

[13]Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 157.

[14]Sharī'atī, *Sociology of Islam*, pp. 73-77.

[15]Ibid. pp. 97-110.

[16]Ibid. pp. 95-6.

[17]Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p. 602.

[18]Ibid. pp. 602-624.

[19]Abū 'Umar Yūsuf ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Andalusī al-Mālikī (*d.* CE 362).

[20]Al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, pp. 198-9.

[21]Muḥammad al-Ansārī al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: al-Maktab Arabiyyah, 1967), vol. XII, part 14, p. 27.

[22]Al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, p. 199.

[23]Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar'u Ta'ārud al-'Aql wa'l-Naql*, edited by Muhammad Rashad Sa'im (Riyadh: Jami'at al-Imām Muhammad ibn Sa'ud al-Islamiyyah, 1981), vol. VIII, p. 383, see also pp. 444-8.

[24]Ibid. p. 385.

[25]Ibid. pp. 361-2.

[26]Ibid. pp. 463-4.

[27]Ibid. p. 367. See also al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi'*, p. 25.

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[28]Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, p. 198.

[29]I.M. Hanīf, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, Book of Qadr (al Muṭbaʿat al-Misriyah bi'l-Azharī, 1930), vol. XVI, p. 207.

[30]Muḥammad ʿAlī Sābūnī, *Min Kunūz al-Sunnah* (Damascus: Maktab al-Ghazzālī, 1981), p. 13.

[31]Ibid. p. 14.

[32]Ismāʿīl al-Fārūqī, "Islam as Culture and Civilization", in Salam Azzam (ed.), *Islam and Contemporary Society* (London and New York: Longman and Islamic Council of Europe, 1982), p. 154.

[33]Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1985), pp. 32, 57–9.

[34]Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī, *Tafsīr al-Jawāhir* (Egypt: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabi, H 1350), vol. XV, p. 75.

[35]Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dār al-Andalus, 1980), pp. 230, 621. Asad implicitly denies man's submission to God in 7:172 as a pre-existential event. This will be discussed further in detail in the evaluation section of this chapter.

[36]Ibid. pp. 230, 621.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Shāh Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* (Uttar Pradesh, India, n.d.), vol. I, p. 394.

[39]Muḥammad Shafīʿ, *Maʿārif al-Qur'ān* (Karachi: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1976), p. 734.

[40]B.F. Skinner (*b.* 1904) is an American psychologist and an influential spokesman for Behaviourism.

[41]*alhama* (the fourth form of the root-verb *lahima*) is explained by Lane to mean directing someone or putting something into someone's mind. It is therefore clear that *alhama* refers to making someone aware of something through inspiration or suggestion (*ilhām*). See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1984).

[42]S. Quṭb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*, vol. VI, p. 3917.

[43]Ibid. p. 3917.

[44]Sharīʿatī, *Sociology of Islam*, p. 42.

[45]Ibid. p. 43.

[46]H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 151.

[47]Sharīʿatī, *Sociology of Islam*, p. 72.

[49]Ibid. p. 109. See also Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 157.

[49]Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 151.

[50]Sharīʿatī, *Sociology of Man*, p. 41.

[51]Ibid. p. 68.

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